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SUBJECT: FLAGSHIP UAE CHARITIES FOCUSED ON AID, NOT IDEOLOGY

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On 25-26 February, U.S. Embassy and Treasury officials met with senior leadership from the Mohammed bin Rashid Establishment for Charitable and Humanitarian Works (MBRHC) and the UAE Red Crescent Society (UAERC). Both UAE-based NGOs affirmed their commitment to deliver aid to the war-torn Gaza Strip, but without providing benefit to, or working through, Hamas. USG officials expressed support for Gaza aid efforts, and highlighted the involvement of Secretary Clinton in the March 2 Sharm el Sheikh donors conference. End Summary.

MBRHC LOOKS FOR GAZA AID CHANNELS

¶2. (C) MBRHC Director Saleh al Mazroei detailed his organization's aid efforts. Roughly 85% of MBRHC aid funds are directed within the UAE, helping nationals, foreigners and bedouins with medical care, schooling, food, rent, etc. The organization has a computer driven process that determines who is eligible for aid, and then tracks the disbursement thereof. MBRHC does not provide cash to aid recipients, instead using checks and direct bank transfers to directly pay hospitals, schools, landlords, etc.

¶3. (C) MBRHC does not maintain international offices, so overseas aid is normally delivered by partnering up with local and international NGOs. To vet overseas NGOs as potential implementation partners, MBRHC checks with Dubai security services, runs Internet searches and checks various blacklists, including UN, OFAC and even Israeli government lists. MBRHC checks with local embassies of the host country NGO and UAE embassies in the country where the aid is to be delivered. They ask for legal establishment records and bank authorization documents. Even with all these steps, MBRHC lamented that it is difficult to ensure 100% avoidance of contact with organizations that can later sully MBRHC's reputation.

¶4. (C) For example, in 2000-2001 MBRHC partnered with UK-based Union of Good to deliver school supplies to children in Gaza. Several years later, the Union of Good was blacklisted by U.S. and Israeli authorities as a Hamas umbrella organization. Although MBRHC ended cooperation with Union of Good in 2001, the Israeli government blacklisted MBRHC in 2008, identifying it as a partner of the banned Hamas front. As a result of the Israeli blacklisting of MBRHC, Israel-based NGOs that had partnered with MBRHC to deliver aid into Gaza are now banned from working with the UAE charity. Saleh fears that U.S. and European NGOs may also avoid contact with his organization. Saleh requested USG assistance in removing its name from the Israeli blacklists.

¶5. (S//NF) Saleh shared that under the direction of UAE authorities and security services, MBRHC does not work with Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated NGOs, to include the UAE-based Human Appeal International (HAI). He said UAE security services can identify Muslim Brotherhood fronts in the Gulf,

but have a more difficult time with U.S. and European NGOs. He asked specifically about the Michigan-based Life for Relief and Development (LRD) -- which recently opened an office in Dubai -- and the Turkish Insani Yardim Vakfi (IHH). Saleh welcomed USG guidance on partnering issues and asked USG to share relevant information with him directly and through UAE security services.

UAE RED CRESCENT PARTNERS WITH UN

16. (C) UAERC Deputy Secretary General for Relief & Project Affairs Saleem Hamad al Junaibi confirmed that his organization seeks to deliver aid in Gaza without benefiting Hamas by partnering with well established international agencies. In the Palestinian territories, the UAERC works with UNDP, UNICEF, UNRWA, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS). The UAERC is not currently working with the Islamic Development Bank. Saleem explained that UAERC works through these agencies to avoid giving money to any political faction -- Hamas or the Palestinian Authority. The UAERC's mission is to deliver aid to the needy, not support political parties.

17. (C) Saleem stated that UAERC works with the international organizations listed above to identify projects that require funding. Projects suitable for UAERC support are jointly agreed upon by UAERC and the partner agency. UAERC relies on the international agencies on the ground to vet projects and implementation issues. Regarding Gaza's current needs, Saleem stated that the UAERC is working with UNRWA to channel aid through Egypt and Jordan. The UAERC often receives applications for assistance through host country embassies present in the UAE.

18. (C) Speaking briefly on Lebanon, Saleem stated that the UAERC works with UNRWA to provide aid for refugee camps. The UAERC maintains a small office in Lebanon that coordinates with the UAE Embassy in Lebanon. When local NGOs apply for aid, the UAERC relies on vetting by the UAE Embassy.

OLSON